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The African a trust from God to the American.

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A S E R M O N

DELIVERED ON THE DAY OF

NATIONAL HUMILIATION, FASTING AND PRAYER,

IN

St. Peter's Church, Baltimore,

JANUARY 4, 1861,

BY THE

REV. GEORGE D. CUMMINS, D.D.

RECTOR.

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*With kind regards of Mrs. Kelso*  
A SERMON

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## S E R M O N .

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ISAIAH, lxy. 8.

“THUS SAITH THE LORD, AS THE NEW WINE IS FOUND IN THE CLUSTER,  
AND ONE SAITH, ‘DESTROY IT NOT, FOR A BLESSING IS IN IT,’ SO WILL  
I DO FOR MY SERVANTS’ SAKES THAT I MAY NOT DESTROY THEM ALL.”

WE are assembled to day in the House of God under circumstances most solemn and affecting to every Christian heart, and at a period of our national history fraught with imminent peril. The Chief Magistrate of a great nation has called its people to keep this day holy by humiliation, fasting and prayer before God, that “His omnipotent arm may save us from the awful effects of our own crimes and follies.”

If an inhabitant of some other planet, or some distant region of the globe, could be present among us to-day for the first time, he might ask, with unfeigned surprise, whence arises the need of this solemnity, and what is the fearful peril which casts its dark shadow before it over the land, like an eclipse of the sun at noonday? Is some foreign invader off the coasts of the land, with an overwhelming force, threatening to burn your cities, desolate the country, and subject it anew to the yoke of foreign tyranny? or is the noisome pestilence abroad on the wings of the wind, making the whole land a *Baca*, or vale of weeping

over its ravages, and have ye met to implore God to arrest the destroying angel? Nay, not these are the perils from which we seek relief by prayer and penitence; but an evil which we would gladly exchange for the pestilence from God or invasion from a foreign foe. Willingly would we now accept David's choice, when God gave to him liberty to *elect* one of three fearful modes of Divine punishment, war, pestilence or famine, and say, with the King of Israel, "Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, and not into the hands of man."

No—we should have to reply to the visitor from some other sphere—we are not trembling before the rapid approach of a foreign foe, or pestilence, or famine; but this is our peril. The people of this once happy and heaven-blessed land, are no longer an united people in heart and brotherly love and generous sympathy; but, though of one blood, of one race, of one language, of one literature, of one religion, of one inheritance in the past, and possessing one hope for the future, are so inflamed by sectional hatred and jealousy as to be almost ready to plunge into all the horrors of civil and internecine war; and having found no hope of deliverance from men, from statesmen and men of policy, we now turn to God and ask Him to turn the hearts of men to peace and conciliation, and to save us from anarchy and ruin.

As an ambassador of Him whose birth was hailed by angels as bringing "peace on earth and good will towards men" and whose sublime title is "Prince of Peace," it is my part to-day, not only in solemn

prayers and litanies, but from the pulpit, "to labor for peace;" and a single word which might increase strife would be sadly out of place at such a time and in such a service. Nor do I design to utter one such word. But there does seem to be a very special appropriateness in occupying this hour, in taking a *Christian* view of the great question which underlies the present crisis in our national affairs, and of our conscientious obligations arising out of it.

It cannot be denied by any that the existence of one element in our national life, is that out of which has arisen all our troubles; that the presence in our midst, of the African race, numbering now one-sixth of the population, and for the most part in a state of involuntary servitude, is the *causa causans*, which prejudice and passion have fed upon until we awaken to see a yawning gulf of destruction before us, from which only an Omnipotent Arm can save us. Were it not for the intermixture of the two races, the Anglo-American and the African, the presence of two civilizations, we can scarcely imagine any serious cause of danger arising to threaten the perpetuity of this nation, unless it should spring from the vices ever following in the train of luxury and inflated prosperity. But this country is divided geographically between two sections, marked by two diverse and yet not necessarily antagonistic social systems; fifteen of the thirty-three States of the Confederacy being States where African slavery is recognized and established by law.

Now, as to the *political* aspect of the slavery question, I do not propose to-day to utter a word. It is

the glory of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this land that her ministers and her bishops, her Ecclesiastical Councils, both State and National, have ever kept aloof from intermeddling with this vexed question. Though existing in every State of the Confederacy, from Maine to Texas, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, her ministers, with scarce an exception, have deemed it a subject not lying within their province to settle; and her representatives from every section have met in General Convention for seventy-five years, from the first session in New York in 1785, under the patriarchal Bishop White, to the last in Richmond in 1859; and in all these not a word on this subject of national politics has been heard to interrupt the flow of harmony and brotherly love. From this true position of a teacher of religion and a guide in spiritual matters alone, it is not my purpose to depart. And if the Union of these States must be shattered by the agitation of this question, the future historian of these times, shall not point to the Protestant Episcopal Church, as having a part of the guilt lying at her door.

I shall, therefore, not enter into a discussion whether African slavery be an advantage or a disadvantage to the well-being of a State—whether certain conditions of climate and soil and culture render it necessary or not—or whether the Constitution protects or prohibits it in the national territories. Upon all these questions I have the right to form and hold an opinion, as a private citizen of the State and Nation, but no right to bring them into this holy place and promulge them

to you. But there is a *moral* and *religious* phase of the question of African slavery, as it exists among us, which is strictly within my province to discuss. And it is this aspect of the subject which has reached such a complexion, that every conscientious Christian living where domestic slavery exists, is called upon to answer in the light of his duty to God for his position towards it, and his responsibilities arising out of it.

For thirty years past a persistent, unwearied and cumulative effort has been made to train the mind of one great section of our country, and that the largest and strongest, to regard slavery and slaveholding under all circumstances as a *moral wrong*, a wrong against God and man, a violation of His will and word, and a crime against humanity; and of course a sin which excludes all who have a part in it from the kingdom of grace here, and the kingdom of heaven hereafter. By the press, secular and religious, by books and tracts without number, by the writings of novelists, by the teachings of schools and colleges, by denunciations from the pulpit and lecture room, by agitations in ecclesiastical conferences, synods and assemblies; by all these agencies multiplied a thousand fold and repeated through the life-time of a generation, the result has been reached; and a *majority* of the citizens of one great section of the country, where slaveholding does not exist, have been brought to the conviction that their brethren of the other section are guilty in this thing of a crime against their fellow men and a sin against their God. This deep feeling has extended into other lands, where, rather we might



say, it had its origin, and Protestant England and Scotland, and Catholic France and Ireland, have united in our condemnation.

Turning our gaze to that section of our land visited with such severe condemnation,—what do we behold? A moral waste? A barren wilderness as to its religious character? Communities given over to the powers of darkness, and not a ray of holy light to illumine the blackness? Nay, the Church of Christ, existing in all its integrity and fulness of spiritual life; powerful and vigorous Churches; ministers of Christ in every quarter, and numbered by thousands; communicants at the altars of the Churches, numbered by hundreds of thousands; holy men and women of faith and prayer, proving the reality of religion in lives consecrated to self-sacrifice and self-denying Christian toil; a type of piety unsurpassed for excellence and simplicity and purity in any age or nation of the globe; benevolent agencies in active exercise for diffusing the gospel throughout the world and among the spiritually-destitute at home; missionary societies sending forth evangelists to India and China and Burmah and Africa; philanthropic societies ministering to the poor, the sick and the prisoner; Howard associations, not less distinguished for heroic daring amidst the pestilence than the famous Florentine Brothers of Mercy; the Gospel preached as faithfully as ever proclaimed by St. Paul, by Christ's true and faithful servants; souls daily converted and added to the Church; revivals of religion, the fruit of the Holy Spirit making the Gospel, the power of God, unto

salvation; learned Divines devoting their lives to the study of the sacred Scriptures; public teachers of morals in schools and colleges; seminaries for training youth for the Gospel ministry—in a word, God's people, acknowledging His word as their guide, claiming His Holy Spirit as their teacher, owning Christ to be their model and great Exemplar.

I can speak more especially for the Church of which I am an humble minister; that in this section where domestic slavery exists. there are well-nigh fifty thousand communicants, served by nearly seven hundred clergymen and presided over by sixteen bishops, many of whom would have adorned the Church of Christ in any age. And if not for all these, yet surely I may not presumptuously claim to speak to-day for the ten thousand communicants of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this State of Maryland. True, indeed, not all of these are themselves holders of slaves, but all are included in a like condemnation, if it be a just one; since to live surrounded by a great and flagrant moral wrong, and not to be a witness against it and to labor for its removal, is to be a sharer in its guilt.

What then, is the attitude of the conscientious Christians of the South towards this great question? I venture to express the opinion that the time has come to let all Christendom know what that posture is—what answer they have to make at the bar of God when charged with upholding a system of iniquity. I would speak then, to-day, in behalf of the Christian whose lot has been cast amidst a social system where slavery is one of its marked features. I speak not

only for the Christian slaveholder, for I am not one of the number, but also for that large class who have been born and reared under its influence.

Let me state the case of one of these: He is born into life in a Southern clime and in a Southern home, and almost the first faces with which he becomes familiar are the dark faces of another race than the one which gave him birth. The first guardian and nurse of his infancy is an African; the earliest playmates of his childhood are the children of this race; he grows to manhood surrounded by their faces now become familiar, and learns to regard them as a part of the household of his parents. Now he comprehends their position, that they are in a state of servitude to the superior race; that they are the descendants of heathens and savages who were brought from their distant homes in Africa, perhaps an hundred years ago. Soon he finds that he must take upon him the personal responsibility of being the master of such, and while receiving the benefit of their labor to provide for their well-being, and the well-being of their children. Seeking honestly to comprehend all the duties and responsibilities of his relation, he sets himself to ascertain all the truth concerning it. And the very first step he reaches is one too patent to be overlooked by any, and that is this:

I. *That he is not responsible for the presence of this race around him, nor for its condition of servitude*—nor was his father any more responsible for it; both received it as an *inheritance*, whether for good or evil: still an inheritance he cannot decline, a burden he

cannot shrink from. He tries to trace back this institution to its source, but finds it coeval with the existence of the nation, and that at the time of the formation of the Confederacy, slavery existed in all but one of the thirteen States of the Union. Thus he finds it to have been a bequest from the mother country, Great Britain; and looking into its history there, he traces its existence to the very earliest periods of Saxon history; and still extending and widening his view, he perceives it pervading all the great historic nations, Italy, Greece, the Eastern kingdoms, and the chosen people of God, even up to the time of the patriarchs. Still, this antiquity of slavery would not of itself satisfy his mind concerning his duty towards it, nor of itself justify it, for error and wrong may be hoary with age, as well as truth and right.

II. Another step then is needed,—*to ascertain God's will concerning it, and a Christian's duty towards the race in bondage, in the light of the teachings of the Word of God.* The entire argument concerning the teaching of the Bible as to the moral and religious phase of slavery is one which might fill a volume far better than a page of a sermon; and we must be content only to mention its leading points.

1. The first of these is the attitude which our Blessed Lord maintained during His earthly ministry towards slavery and slaveholders. When our Saviour appeared on the earth, domestic servitude existed, by law, throughout the entire Roman Empire, from Britain to Parthia, and no part of the immense dominion of the Cæsars was exempt from it. Slaves were acquired by

war, by commerce, by inheritance, and even free-born Romans could be reduced to slavery, under certain circumstances, by the operation of law. In the population of Italy, under Augustus, there were three slaves to every free man. The Romans, who were masters of Judea, transported their slaves thither, as an indispensable part of their domestic arrangement. The Divine Redeemer, on His missions of mercy, could not fail to be brought into contact with the system. And so, indeed it proved, for one of His first and most striking miracles of mercy was wrought upon a slave of a Roman centurion, and in answer to the prayer of the master; and it was of this Roman slaveholder that Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." The *silence* of Jesus with reference to the moral aspect of slavery is that which is most significant to a Christian man in determining his duty towards it. He did not shrink from the most severe denunciations of the flagrant and crying sins of the men of his time for fear of personal injury to himself. Let any one who would be convinced of this read the 23d chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, and hear the stern and overwhelming rebukes which fell from the lips of Christ against the prevailing sins of the people. Hypocrisy, envy, malice, uncleanness, extortion, oppressing the poor, blood-guiltiness, all are charged home upon the people, until the storm of his indignation falls in one thunderbolt of—"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"\* Yet in

\* St. Matthew, xxiii. 13—33.



all the list of woes, there is none pronounced against slaveholding or the slaveholder.

2. The next point in the Scripture argument is the attitude of the apostles of Christ towards the same system. These inspired and holy men went forth at the command of their master to preach the gospel and lay the foundations of His church. One of them especially, St. Paul, traveled through a great portion of the Roman Empire, every where coming into direct and close contact with slavery. Yet in all his preaching and in all his epistles to the churches planted by him, there is not to be found one testimony against the *wrong* of slavery; not one precept that it is the duty of masters to emancipate their slaves, not a word of the *sinfulness* of slavery. All other offences of man against his fellow-man are condemned unsparingly; but this is strangely omitted, if it be the deadly sin it is now proclaimed by some.

But look at the conduct and teachings of St. Paul more in detail. In the city of Athens, where he preached to the philosophers on Mars Hill, and reasoned with the Stoics and Epicureans in the marketplace, three-fourths of the population were slaves: yet not a word falls from his lips concerning this chief feature of Athenian society in all that memorable discourse. At Corinth, which was for so long a time the chief slave mart of Greece, St. Paul resided for eighteen months in the exercise of his ministry, and founded a church embracing both converted masters and slaves. To this church he writes a letter full of inspired counsels, and among them is this: "Let every man abide

in the same calling wherein he was called," that is, "called" into Christ's kingdom. "Art thou called being a servant?—(a slave)—care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free use it rather"—that is, if thy freedom is offered thee, accept it and enjoy it. "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, abide therein with God."<sup>\*</sup> At Ephesus, also, where slaves were very numerous, St. Paul dwelt two whole years "preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God." Here, too, these bondmen were brought into the liberty of the sons of God and enrolled in His church. And writing to them afterward, the apostle says, "servants? (slaves) be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service, as to the Lord and not unto men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord whether he be bond or free."<sup>†</sup> Here slaves are charged to perform their duties of obedience and single-minded service "as unto Christ," as accountable unto God for fidelity to their masters.

The same heaven-taught man, writing to Timothy concerning his duties towards the churches over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer, thus defines the duties of slaves: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all

<sup>\*</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 20—24.

<sup>†</sup> Eph. vi. 5—9.

honor that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren ; but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.”\* Then follows an injunction to Timothy to withdraw himself from persons who taught a contrary doctrine. Of a like import is his teaching to Titus, the bishop of Crete : “ Exhort servants (slaves) to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them in all things ; not answering again ; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”† “Crete was full of slaves from the earliest times to which history carries us.”

As to the case of Onesimus, I prefer to quote the language of the late Prof. Edwards, of the Andover Theological Seminary, one of the first Biblical scholars of this century and one of the holiest men who have ever adorned the cause of Sacred literature. He says, “Onesimus was the slave of Philemon, a Colossian, who had been made a Christian through the ministry of Paul. He absconded from his master for a reason which is not fully explained. In the course of his flight, he met with the apostle at Rome, by whom he was converted, and ultimately recommended to the favor of his old master. St. Paul would, under any circumstances, have had no choice, but to send Onesimus to his master ; the detention of a fugitive slave was considered the same offence as theft, and would, no doubt, incur liability to prosecution for damages.”‡

\* 1 Tim. vi. 1—2.

† Titus, ii. 4—10.

‡ Biblical Repository, Oct. 1835.

This, then, is the argument from the New Testament concerning slavery as a moral wrong. Every allusion to it by inspired apostles recognizes it as a part of the social system established by law, and enjoins fidelity in the discharge of the duties arising out of it, and no where, in a single instance, is it declared to be of itself sinful. But there is an *indirect* sanction of the system, perhaps still more marked. The inspired writers of the New Testament *do* condemn the *abuses* of the relation between master and slave, do denounce the *evils* which were found existing along with it in their day. These *abuses* or *evils* were indeed enormous among the Greeks and Romans. In both nations the life of the slave was absolutely in the power of the master. At Athens oftentimes cruel and barbarous punishments were inflicted upon them, sometimes the torture of the wheel. The Romans punished gross offences among them by crucifixion. In Sparta they were liable to the horrible *cryptia* or ambushade, when the Spartan youth were encouraged by their governors to fall upon the Helots at night, or in unfrequented places, and murder them, that these youths might be better fitted for the stern and cruel scenes of war. It is an insult to Christianity, whose spirit is one of infinite mercy and love, to ask the question whether it *approved* or even *tolerated* such evils? The soul of every Christian revolts against all cruelty, all injustice, all oppression in every relation of life. Jesus did condemn all the evils which existed along with slavery, when he said, "Blessed are the merciful." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to

them." The *golden rule*, which bade the slaveholder treat the bondman with the same justice and kindness with which *he* would wish to be treated if their relations were reversed.

And the apostles of Jesus likewise did not hesitate to warn Christian masters against these evils, and to guard them from these abuses. "And ye masters!" says St. Paul to the Ephesians, "forbear threatening, knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him." Ephesians, v. 9. To the Colossians he writes, "masters! give unto your servants (slaves) that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven;" Col. iv. 1. "That this injunction cannot mean the legal enfranchisement of the slave is clear," says Prof. Edwards, "for why, in that case, were any directions given to the slaves, if the relation was not to continue."\* And the same apostle denounces "men-stealers," or those who unlawfully seduced freemen to slavery as on a par with murderers.†

The argument to be drawn from these facts is, that inasmuch as the apostles of our Lord did condemn the abuses which were connected with slavery, and did prescribe the duties of both masters and slaves; that they did indirectly recognize the system as not forbidden by the word or will of God, and not of itself involving moral wrong, and their *practice* everywhere was in keeping with this view; for in every place where the Church was planted, slaveholders were

\* Biblical Repository, Oct. 1835.

† 1 Timothy, i. 10.



admitted into its fellowship without hesitation. Philemon, of Colosse, was but one of the pious slaveholders who was a "brother dearly beloved and fellow laborer,"\* to St. Paul.

That the Gospel of Christ did much to ameliorate the condition of the slave, and remove the evils of slavery, we joyfully acknowledge. It proclaimed with trumpet tongue, charity, forgiveness, kindness and love. It elevated the worth of the soul of the slave. It banished and extirpated the gladiatorial combats which were always among the slaves trained for this purpose. It taught the master that the slave had a common share with him in sin and in redemption; that he was the purchase of a common Redeemer's blood; and that *in Christ* there was neither bond nor free. But it never, directly or indirectly, by precept or practice, taught that slaveholding was a sin against God and a crime against man.

Nor did slavery cease to exist and prevail in the primitive church of the first three centuries—the days of its very highest purity, and when refined by the fires of martyrdom. Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, who was torn to pieces by the lions in the Coliseum at Rome, writing to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who, for his confession of Christ, was burned at the stake, says—"Overlook not the men and maid servants, neither let them be puffed up; but rather let them be more subject to the glory of God, that they may obtain from Him a better freedom. Let them not

\* Philemon, i. 1.

desire to be set free at the public cost that they be not slaves to their own lusts.”\* But the early Church pursued the same course towards the institution as the apostles did. It did not denounce it, nor seek violently to overturn it. It recognized it as established by law and permitted by the Providence of God, but admitted freely masters and slaves to all its privileges and blessings—while at the same time it sought to mitigate the evils existing along with it. Slaves, holding the true faith, were taken into the service of the Church, and ordained to the ministry by the consent of their masters, without being emancipated. Christian Emperors enacted laws to restrain the power of inhuman masters. But the primitive Church rose, flourished and triumphed over the Empire and left slavery to exist for centuries afterwards.

By the light of this survey of Scripture, and the history of the early Church, a Christian man whose lot is cast amidst slavery in this age and nation, is enabled to ascertain his duty towards it—and that is:

III. *To regard the African race in bondage (and in freedom too) as a solemn trust committed to this people from God, and that He has given to us the great mission of working out His purposes of mercy and love towards them.* The Anglo-American, the tutelar guardian of the African—this is the lofty view to which we now rise. It is a study of intense interest to trace the workings of God’s Providence in the mode He has chosen to effect His purposes concerning these children of Ham.

\* Epistle of Ignatius, chap. 2.

He has linked together, by a counsel of infinite wisdom, the destiny of two races, more diverse from each other than any two upon the globe. By the silver thread of His providence the weakest race on the earth has been joined to the strongest, the oldest to the newest, the most repulsive barbarism to the highest civilization, the darkest superstition to the brightest and purest Christianity. The feeble African parasite has found a prop on which to climb on the noble oak of our Western land.

Other races have at different periods of history been brought into close and intimate relations with the African race, as the Roman and the Castilian, but not to these has God entrusted this great work. To the Anglo-Saxon and the American has He reserved the high honor. See already how He is leading them on in the accomplishing of this work.

1. In abolishing the slave-trade, the fruitful source of every evil on the Continent of Africa.

2. In stimulating explorations throughout the land heretofore a *terra incognita*, thus throwing open to Christianity and civilization a vast area peopled by savage and degraded tribes.

3. Next, by the missionary enterprise which has already translated the Bible into five dialects and preached the Gospel to five millions of its people.

4. Above all, God has brought these people to our doors and placed them in our homes, and said to us by His Providence, "take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee wages." It is a sublime trust, a stupendous work, worthy of the genius of this

Christian nation, to train, to discipline a race, to prepare them to work out the destiny of a continent of one hundred and fifty millions of the same race. We believe this to be the design of God, in the presence and condition of the African in this land. And it is for us to decide whether we will fulfil this high mission, or fail ignominiously under it. We cannot decline the trust; it is ours by inheritance, and not by our seeking. We cannot escape from its responsibilities, if we would. But how shall we best fulfil that trust? This question involves and determines our duty towards the Africans in servitude. How shall we prove ourselves their truest friends—their best guardians? How discharge our duty towards them in the light of our duty to the Master whom we serve? Will it be by seeking hastily and violently to change their condition, and bid them go forth from under our guardianship? As well might we turn from our doors our children of tender years and send them forth, helpless, into the world, exposed to every evil. It has been well and truthfully said, that “it is not too much to say that if the South should, at this moment, surrender every slave, the wisdom of the entire world, united in solemn council, could not solve the question of their disposal.” But we may add, that the Providence of God will solve it, in His own time, if we do not rashly thwart His plans, by our shortsighted schemes. It may, indeed, be a long time before He develops all His purposes towards the African race, and like ancient Israel, He may prolong the time of their discipline. But in all His sublime move-

ments, there is ever the same slow and stately movement, ever the absence of all haste. It required four thousand years to prepare the world for the Advent of Christianity; and it may require four thousand more to extend its triumphs over the whole earth. This is, indeed, a feature of the Divine working most opposed to human schemes of impatient haste. Many have lost all faith in the final triumph of truth and right, because of the slow progress made in a generation or a century. Calvin's motto upon his signet-ring was the Psalmist's cry, *Quousque Domine?* "How long, O Lord?" But we can well be patient and wait on Him, with whom a "thousand years are as one day."

But the chief part of the question as to our duty towards the subject-race among us, is not yet answered. What would God have us do for and towards them? I reply:

1. To acknowledge him as of one blood with ourselves, a sharer in a common humanity, a partaker of our hopes and fears.

2. To labor for his salvation, for his conversion from a savage and a heathen to a servant of Christ; to make him one with us in the heritage of the Church of the Redeemer. Who can suppose that if the Apostles of our Lord were now among us and in our lot, that they would desire to do more? St. Paul did not at Corinth and Colosse, nor did Timothy at Ephesus, nor did Titus at Crete.

This great work, the Christians of the South are now zealously and earnestly striving to perform. Throughout the fifteen slaveholding States of this



Union, there are men and women of God who feel the solemn duty resting upon them to labor for the conversion of the slave. Every Christian denomination of the South is engaged in this work, each seeking to surpass the other in holy zeal. In some of the Churches, the Africans professing the faith of Christ are numbered by tens and even hundreds of thousands. Sunday Schools for their instruction in the doctrines of the Gospel, abound in every part of the Southern country, and the *Gospel is preached to as many of the slaves, in proportion to their numbers, as it is to any people of any section of this land.* It was lately proved by a most careful statistical scrutiny, that in the chief commercial metropolis of this country, out of a population of 800,000 people, only 200,000 were provided with opportunities for having the Gospel preached, while 600,000 could not find a place in any House of God, if they so desired. Can this be said of the religious privileges of the slaves of the South? Far, very far from it; the number of these is exceedingly small who do not regularly hear the Gospel, or have it within their power to hear it.

I can speak with certainty of our own branch of Christ's Church; and of that I can testify to-day, that in all our large Southern Dioceses, the Church is successfully at work in the conversion of the African. Says the Right Rev. Bishop Green, of Mississippi, in his last report to the General Convention of our Church: "Never before have so many of the slave population been brought within the bosom of the Church in this diocese. Never before has this field

presented such an inviting aspect to the laborer in the spiritual harvest. On every hand is observed the increasing desire on the part of masters to give unto their servants the blessings of the Gospel and the Church; and could we only comply with their pressing invitations to preach the Word of Life to our 'Africa at home,' the time would soon come when we should behold thousands of Ethiopia's sons stretching out their hands unto God."\*

Says the truly apostolic Bishop Davis, of South Carolina, "about fifty chapels for the benefit of negroes on plantations, are now in use for the worship of God and the religious instruction of slaves. Many planters employ missionaries or catechists for this purpose; many more would do so, if it were possible to procure them. In one parish, there are thirteen chapels for negroes supplied with regular services. The number of negroes attending the services of the Church is very large and increasing annually."† Of Virginia, I can speak from a residence of nearly eight years as a minister in two of her principal cities. I believe facts would bear me out in the statement of my belief, that in the State of Virginia, the number of colored church members in all the denominations is equal to, if not greater than that of the whites. All the Churches of that commonwealth are alive to their duty toward the slave. All the pious people of God feel most deeply their personal share in this obligation, and seek the

\* Journal of General Convention of 1859—Mississippi.

† Do. Do. South Carolina.

means of discharging it. The wealthy farmer builds for the slaves their own chapel, and provides them a spiritual teacher. Not a Church edifice is erected in town or country, but provision is made within its walls for the people of color. Flourishing Churches of colored people alone exist in every city and the larger towns. Sunday schools for adults and children are under the care of all the Churches. In thousands of homes, on every Sunday, masters and mistresses assemble a portion of their servants for religious instruction. And this very concern, for the religious welfare of the slave, tends to develop the finest graces of the Christian character. Nothing so powerfully nourishes the Christian graces of the parent, as the responsibilities of his relation to the children whom God has given him. To a Christian slaveholder, his slaves occupy to him a relation scarcely less inferior to that of children; they form part of his household, and for their temporal and eternal welfare he feels himself responsible to God. How profound is this feeling of responsibility, I can attest from a personal residence among the pious masters of Virginia. I "speak that which I know and testify that which I have seen." It was my lot to minister at the altar of a Church where, along with three hundred whites, fifty slaves knelt by them to receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper. I have seen the master standing at the chancel of the Church to act as sponsor in baptism for a faithful slave who came forward to receive the sacred rite. I have seen Christian women of the highest refinement and social position, sitting down on every Lord's

day in the midst of the classes of a Sunday School of slaves, to instruct them in the knowledge of salvation. I have known the slave girl in consumption to be taken into the chamber of her mistress and nursed with a care equal to a mother's tenderness, and the passage to the grave illumined by the light of Christian sympathy and love. And I have seen a congregation of three thousand slaves presided over by their regular pastor, the President of a College, at the close of each sermon responding to the catechetical instruction concerning the truths preached.

But it will be said that according to the example of the apostles and the early Christians, our whole duty towards slavery is not fulfilled until we do our part to correct its abuses and remove the evils attendant upon it—and we freely admit this. It is our part and duty following in the steps of the apostles, to tell both masters and servants of their mutual duties, and to warn them against abusing the relation in which they stand to each other—to say to the servant “obey your masters in singleness of heart as unto the Lord!”—to say to the masters, “give unto your servants that which is just and equal.” And we firmly and earnestly believe that there is not an evil connected with slavery as it now exists in the Southern States, which in due time would not be corrected and removed by the force of Christian sentiment, enlightened by the Holy Spirit and guided by the Word of God. *There is power enough in the Christianity of the South to grapple with and solve all the difficulties of this great question, if left unhindered by interference from without.*

A word to the Christian people of the State of Maryland must be added to complete the survey of our duty in the position where God's Providence has placed us. There is much in your position towards the African race which may comfort you amidst the perils of the present crisis. You have not been wanting in the effort to discharge your trust, and to perform your duty towards this people. The slaves of Maryland share equally with you all the inheritance of the Gospel and the Church of Christ. Eighty thousand free people of color live within your borders, in thousands of happy homes, unoppressed by any heavy burden, with schools, churches, and ministers of their own, with "none to molest them or make them afraid."\* And last and not least, you have planted from among these a Christian colony on the shores of Africa, now part of a Republic, a brilliant gem on the dark forehead of that continent, and the centre of light and knowledge and religion to millions of its heathen and savage tribes.

*Shall all this work continue?* Shall we go forward in the strength of God, fulfilling the mission He has assigned to us toward the African, and working out God's blessed purpose towards him through our agency? Shall we bear him on with us to our and his final triumph? or shall we perish with him? or leave him to perish? There is, to my mind, but one thing that will determine these questions—THE PRESERVATION OR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE UNION OF THIS

\* Eighteen Churches for colored people ministered to by colored men are to be found in this City alone.



CONFEDERACY. May God in His infinite mercy preserve it for us, for our children and our children's children, for generations yet unborn. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."









